SUMMER READING and WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
RISING 8TH GRADERS (Class of 2017)

Read LOTS of books this summer! Strong reading skills help you in all subjects, and reading is the single most important preparation for the High School Placement Test. If you need any ideas for pleasure reading this summer, two favorite series are Percy Jackson and the Olympians by Rick Riordan (helpful in introducing Greek Mythology and geography) and Lemony Snicket’s “A Series of Unfortunate Events” (helpful in supporting vocabulary development and expansion). List the books you read on the Reading Log and include the log in your packet. Have a great summer!!

The assignments described below should be completed over the summer and turned in on the first day of school (Monday, August 29, 2016). Please put your name on all items and submit in a single stapled booklet with a cover page that includes your name and a picture or drawing inspired by something you read over the summer. This assignment and the Diocesan reading list are on the BSS website.

Assignment 1 – Required – Read Merchant of Venice, by William Shakespeare

This is a great play to begin our study of Shakespeare. Please read the whole play and complete the following activities. You may either do all of this on computer and submit electronically to my email address by 8 am on 8/29/15 or use loose leaf paper and submit it in your packet. You are being given a numbered book from school, and you will need to bring that back to school with you and return it this fall. Feel free to read No Fear Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice to support your understanding, or go to Spark Notes to reinforce your understanding of the plot, characters, and key themes.

• Keep a “vocabulary log” of the words you do not understand even after reviewing the definitions in the book. Your log will likely be lengthy, because the spoken language during Shakespeare’s time was different and he used sophisticated vocabulary. Please write the definitions for at least 10 of the words in your log.
• Create a cartoon, timeline, image map, or plot journey to summarize the plot and key themes.
• Write a well-developed essay of at least 5 paragraphs comparing two characters—one to you and the other so someone else. More specifically,
  o For one of the characters, compare that character to yourself, describing the ways in which you are similar and different and discussing why you would or wouldn’t act similarly in the kinds of situations that character faced (use descriptive language and specific examples from the play to support your statements);
  o Compare the other character you select to someone else (someone you know, or a celebrity), discussing similarities and differences;
• Pretend that you’ve been assigned the task of directing a modern version of The Merchant of Venice. In an essay, describe the ideas you have for how you would modernize the play. Offer specific ideas relating to characters, staging, thematic and plot presentation, or other aspects of the play, characters and about ideas you have for modernizing the play.

Assignment 2 – Required – Read one of the following nonfiction books (most/all are available at the public library), and then complete the essay assignment.

General Audiences
• Wait Till Next Year, by Doris Kearns Goodwin (memoir, early 50’s, Brooklyn, father daughter bonding over Brooklyn Dodgers)
• Gifted Hands: the Ben Carson Story, by Ben Carson (inspirational neurosurgeon thought stupid as a middle school student)
• Moneyball, by Michael Lewis (baseball and thinking outside the box)
• Silent Spring, by Rachel Carson (launched the environmental movement)
• Jane Goodall, by Tara Welty
• Albert Einstein: The Miracle Mind, by Tabatha Yeatts
• What the World Eats, by Faith D’Aluisio
• A Life in the Wild, by Pamela S. Turner
• Something Out of Nothing: Marie Curie and Radium, by Carla Kollough McClafferty

Written for Young Adults/Middle School
• Almost Astronauts: 13 Women who Dared to Dream, by Tanya Lee Stone
• Chasing Lincoln’s Killer, by Swanson
• Charles and Emma: The Darwins’ Leap of Faith, by Deborah Heiligman
• Claudette Colvin: Twice toward Justice (civil rights), by Phillip Hoose
• Farewell to Manzanar, by Jeanne Wakatsuki (Japanese American internment during WWII)
• Guinea Pig Scientists, by Leslie Dendy and Mel Boring
• Spies of Mississippi, by Rick Bowers (story of the spy network that tried to destroy the civil rights movement)
• The Life and Death of Adolph Hitler, by James Cross Giblin (really well reviewed)
• Good Brother, Bad Brother: The Story of Edwin Booth and John Wilkes Booth, by James Cross Giblin

Assignment for the chosen nonfiction book (selected from the list above)
Write a 1-2 page reaction essay that incorporates your answers to the following prompts, but presents them in a well-written essay format along with other aspects of the book you found interesting or surprising:

a) Before I read this, I didn’t know that _____;
b) We always hear about this person being ____, but I was surprised to learn that she/he _________;
c) Attitudes in society were really important in shaping this person’s life in __________;
d) I couldn’t believe what __________ it took for [protagonist in the book you choose] to overcome __________.
e) This book inspires me or applies to my life in these ways: ___________; 
f) If I had been in his/her shoes, I would have ________.

Assignment 3 – Read The Wednesday Wars by Gary D. Schmidt

Choose one of the following options. I would suggest making your selection around the halfway point of your reading. All projects begin with a 10-sentence summary. This should be part of your finished product.

Here are your 8 project options!

• Soundtrack: create a soundtrack for your book.
  o 10 sentence summary
  o Split book into sections (either chapters or groups of chapters)
  o Include 12 (school appropriate) songs, describe how each fits the book (which scene/chapter)
    ▪ Give song title and artist
- If you are able, you may choose create a CD or playlist to share, or you can provide links to the songs online (if available).
  - Write 3-4 sentences for each song, in which you describe the scene and why the song fits with this particular moment

- **Found Poem**: as you read, keep track of lines that have a special meaning, or just sound interesting, and use those lines to create a poem that expresses the message of the book.
  - 10 sentence summary
  - 20 lines minimum
  - Typed final copy: present neatly (illustrations, colors, fonts, etc.)
  - The final poem can be submitted as a decorated hard copy.
  - Write a paragraph in which you describe how your poem reinterprets the story and why you chose the lines you did.
  - Here is an example [http://www.teenink.com/poetry/all/article/123133/](http://www.teenink.com/poetry/all/article/123133/)

- **Timeline of events**
  - 10 sentence summary (does not count as an event)
  - Include 12 - 15 events from the novel, in chronological order
  - At least 10 of those events should include a picture
  - Write 3-4 sentences for each event in which you describe what happens and why it is significant.

- **Slide show (10 topics)**
  - **References**: Create a PowerPoint presentation to explain/show/present references and allusions in the novel. Many are from the 60s (e.g., Walter Cronkite, flower child, Fidel Castro, Carl Yastrzemski), and others are allusions to literature (e.g., rats named Sycorax and Caliban). Notice when there is a reference that has no meaning for you and find out what it means! For references related to the time setting of the novel, try to get some video, as well. A picture is worth a thousand words—and a video, even more so!
  - **Vietnam War**: You may take the idea from above and present information about the Vietnam War. You may focus on references in the novel (protests, Khesanh, etc.) or just learn about the war and prepare a PowerPoint presentation. (10 to 20 slides)
  - **Shakespeare**: You make take the idea from above and present information about William Shakespeare.

- **Treasure Island**: There is often a book within a book in literature. In addition to the Shakespeare theme, Holling has read *Treasure Island* four times and makes many references and comparisons. You may choose to read *Treasure Island* and write an essay that includes a brief summary and an explanation of how the Gary Schmidt uses references to *Treasure Island* and why you think this book was so important to Holling. Do you have a book that you have read many times? If yes, why is that book important to you and what do you get from reading it multiple times?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Book</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Main subject</th>
<th>What did you like most?</th>
<th>Do you recommend this book?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Rising Students of US History,

1. Please send us a postcard from some place you visit this summer. (This is NOT optional; it is not extra credit.) This assignment is for your first grade of the year. Write a message on the other side about your observation or experience. Send to 7th Grade, Blessed Sacrament School, 1417 W. Braddock Road, Alexandria, VA  22302. It will be nice to come back to some mail! I would like this to arrive at BSS before August 19.

2. Consider taking advantage of some of the museum opportunities that exist in Washington. The following are suggestions of things that I think you would enjoy and that will give you some context for topics you will be studying during the next two years.

   • Smithsonian Museum of American History
   • Smithsonian: National Portrait Gallery and Museum of American Art, located together across from Verizon Center; beautiful atrium for lunch; personal favorite!
   • Mount Vernon
   • National Museum of the American Indian: This is a reading/thinking experience. The exhibits are very thoughtful and thought-provoking, but there is not a lot of “stuff” to see. Another fine dining experience; you will appreciate how connected our foods are to the Native American heritage. Best museum dining in DC!

3. Look for the history-ish opportunity wherever you are! Examples: World War II watch towers along Delaware Coast; can visit one at Cape Henlopen.

4. Read! Any historical fiction or nonfiction will broaden your base for understanding our study of US history in 7th and 8th grades. Follow a current events topic.

5. Movies: Many great movies can expose you to historical context or significant people in history. Do some searching and find a few that interest you.

Have a wonderful summer, and I look forward to studying the history of the United States with you.

Sincerely,

Ms. McBride
Rising 8th Graders – OPTIONAL Summer Science Work, Summer 2016

OPTIONAL: Extra Credit in Science

Summer is the perfect season for Science. As optional extra credit, visit a science museum (such as the Smithsonian’s Natural History Museum, Arts and Industries, or Air and Space Museum, or National Geographic here in DC; the Maryland Science Center at Baltimore’s Inner Harbor; the Science Museum in Richmond; the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia; the New York Hall of Science in New York; the Exploratorium in San Francisco; or a science or discovery museum in another city) and spend some time investigating the exhibits.

For each one of these visits you undertake, do a one-half to one-page report. Your report should be in the following format:

- Your name at top line in the right margin
- “Optional Summer Science Work: 8th Gr.”, written on the second line, below your name
- Name of science museum visited, listed on the third line, below Optional Summer Science Work
- Date you visited the museum, listed on the fourth line, below the museum name
- Body of Report should include:
  What exhibit(s) you visited at the museum,
  What did you experience that was most fascinating to you, and why?
  What new information did you learn from this?

Each of these will be worth up to 15 bonus points, depending on the quality.